

Chapter 1

The First Day of First Grade



“Woo-hoo!” J.B. cheered. “It’s the first day of first grade.”

“I’ve been waiting all summer for this,” J.B.’s friend Albert said.

“Me, too,” Marika agreed. “I even made up a dance about it.” She spun around on her toes. “I call it, ‘First Day Ballet.’”

“I like your tutu,” Marika’s best friend, Justine, said.

“Thanks,” Marika answered. “I got it for the first day of school.”

“These are my new sneakers,” Justine said.

“Wow!” Marika said. “They’re cool.”

Justine jumped up and down. “I want to go inside,” she told her friends. “I’m tired of waiting.”

“We all are,” J.B. agreed. “We want to see our new classroom.”

“And meet our new teacher,” Albert added.

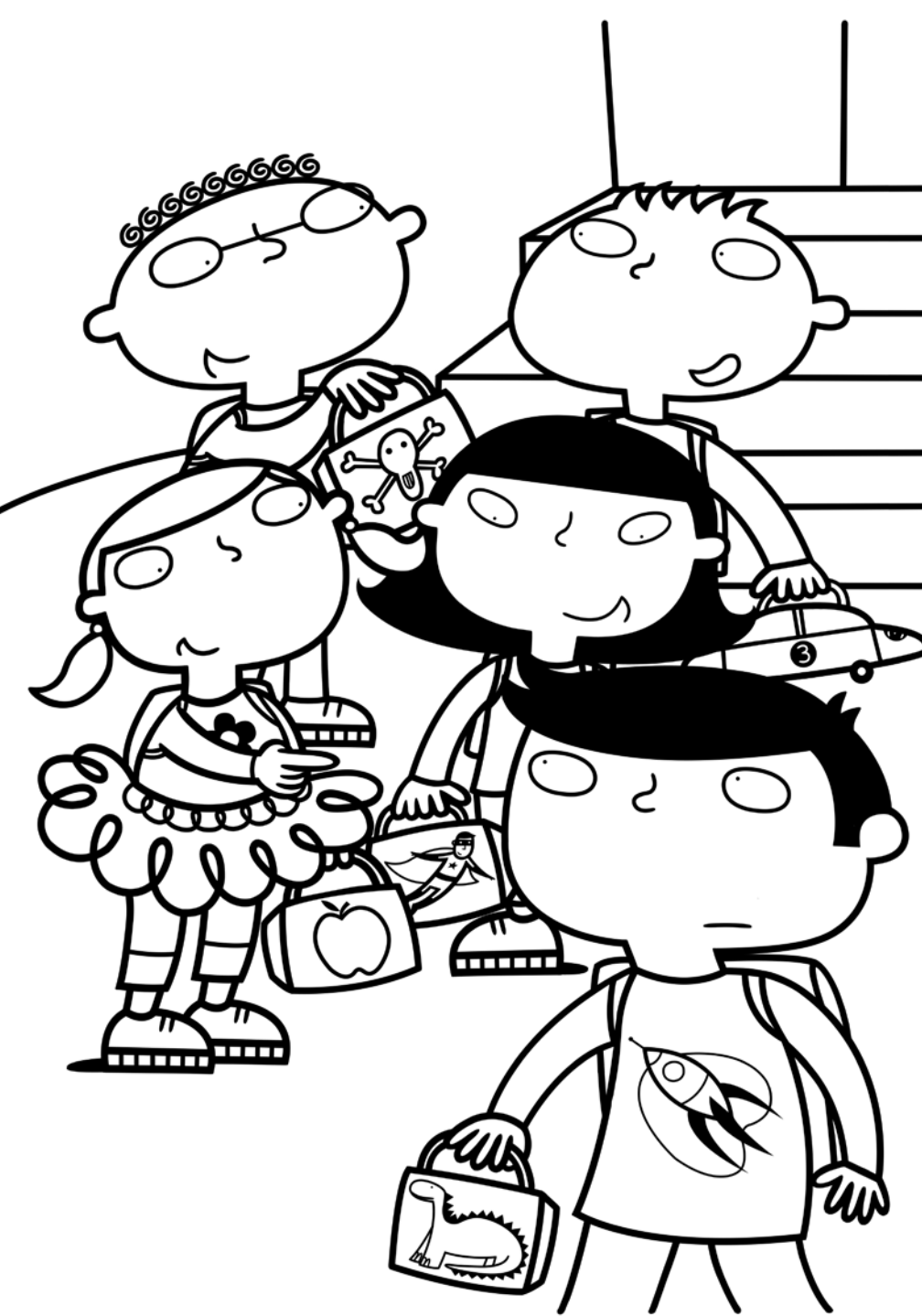
“I heard Miss Popper is the nicest teacher in the school,” Justine said.

“I heard that, too,” J.B. agreed.

“That’s why I can’t wait to start first grade,” Albert said.

“Me, too,” Marika said. “But not Carlos.” She pointed to him. He did not look happy.

“Don’t you want to be a first grader?” J.B. asked him.



Carlos shook his head. “No!” he said. “I liked kindergarten.”

“But first grade is a *real* grade,” J.B. said. “It has a number.”

“What’s so great about numbers?” Carlos asked. “I like letters better.”

“But we’re going to learn to read in first grade,” Albert said.

“I liked it when Ms. Kelly read *to* us in kindergarten,” Carlos told him.

“I didn’t like rest time,” Justine said.

“That’s because you can’t lie still,” Marika teased.

Justine giggled. “I know,” she said. “I’m a wiggler.”

“I *liked* rest time,” Carlos said.

“Kindergarten was only half a day,” Albert said. “We didn’t eat lunch in school.”

“We will this year!” J.B. held up his brand-new lunch box. It was shaped like a race car.

“Cool!” Albert said.

“My lunch box has superheroes on it,” Justine said. “And there’s a hero *in* it, too.”

“What kind of superhero fits in there?” Marika asked.



“One with meat, cheese, lettuce, and tomato,” Justine said. “It’s a hero *sandwich!*”

Albert showed everyone his pirate lunch box. “I have a peanut-butter-and-banana sandwich. Mmmm!”

“I have sushi,” Marika said.

“What’s sushi?” Carlos asked.

“Raw fish,” Marika said. She opened her lunch box.

Carlos looked inside. “Yuck!” he said. “I don’t want to eat near anyone who has raw fish for lunch! Ewww!”

“You *have* to eat near me,” Marika said. “We’re in first grade together.”

“No way!” Carlos shouted. “I am not going to first grade. Not ever!”